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Stuart McLean
1948—2017

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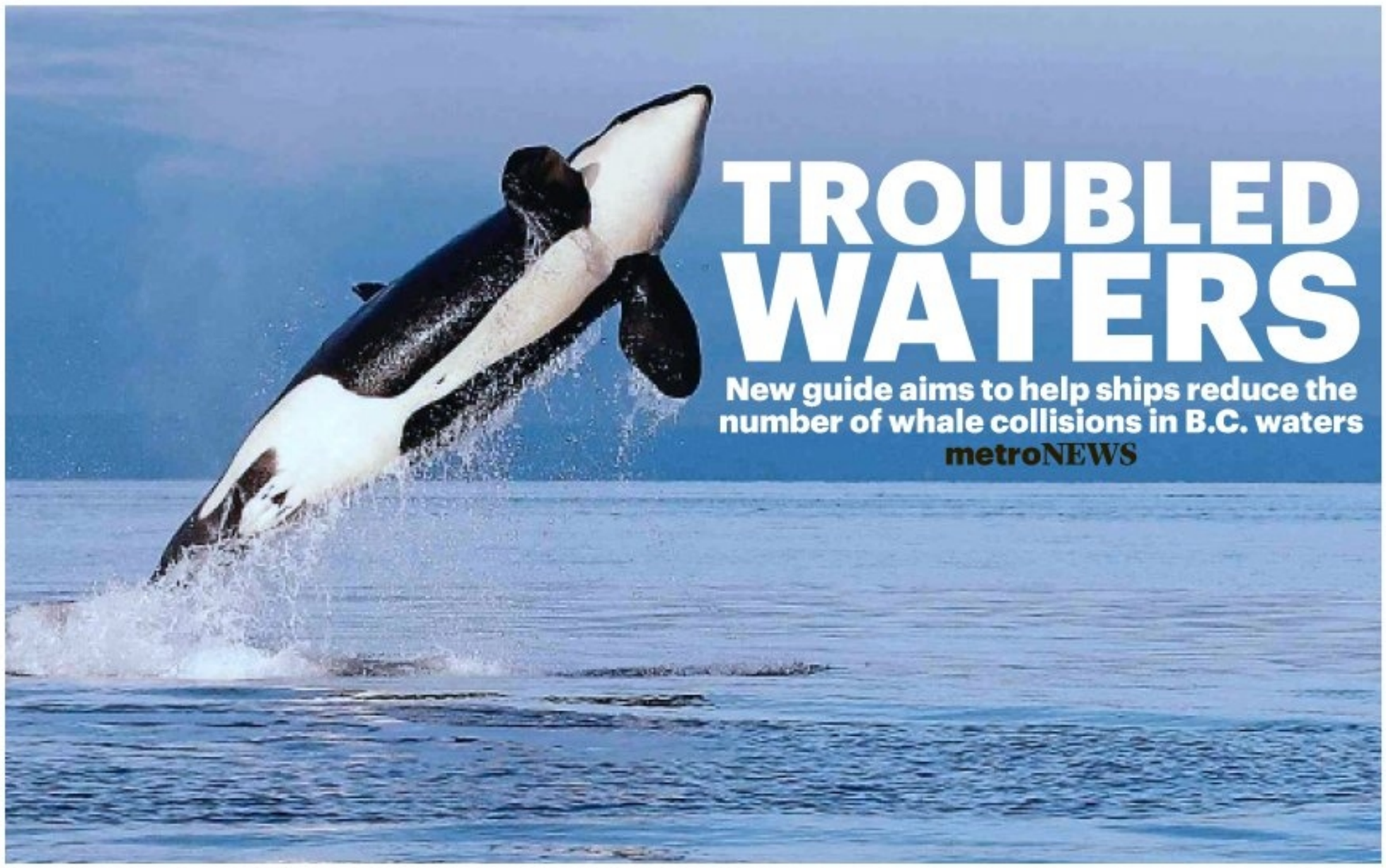

TROUBLED WATERS

New guide aims to help ships reduce the number of whale collisions in B.C. waters

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RISING HOPE

B.C.'s home loan program draws more first-time homebuyers into market

Fired for taking $0.50 worth of food, Burger King cook wins $46K in damages

'Lotusland' blisses its way to 6th place in 'most mindful' cities list

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Your essential daily news

Canadian research says labels inaccurate on amount of melatonin hormones in supplements.

First-time buyers buoyed up

B.C.'s interest-free home loan program is drawing more homebuyers into the market, while realtors notice a spike in interest in more affordable housing units

JEN ST. DENIS/METRO

Realtors say clients are taking advantage of the B.C. government's new interest-free down payment loan program, and it may be helping to boost condo sales — especially in more affordable markets such as East Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.

Meanwhile, higher-priced parts of Metro Vancouver's housing market, and especially the single detached market, continue to lag.

"It's raised the hopes of some people who didn't have the down payment," said Brian Rushton, a realtor with Century 21, of B.C.'s HOME loan program. "There's been an increase in activity as it relates to first-time buyers."

The taxpayer funded, interest-free loan program lends applicants up to $37,500 towards a down payment. Successful applicants don't have to begin paying the loan back for five years, but must be pre-approved for an insured high-ratio first mortgage, where the down payment is less than 20 per cent of the home's purchase price.

Steve Saretsky, a realtor with Sutton Group-West Broadway, noted that detached sales in the Fraser Valley are moribund, townhouses are going strong, but the condo market is "off the charts," with condo sales up 42 per cent year over year.

"I think right now what's driving the market is the quest for affordability," Saretsky said.

Condos line the water in Vancouver's Yaletown neighborhood. Condo sales are up 42 per cent year over year. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

"What I see in the market right now is a lot of first-time buyers. It's kind of scary."

Saretsky confirmed he has some clients who are or plan to take advantage of the B.C. HOME Partnership program, and has heard from other realtors that interest in the program is strong. Both Saretsky and Rushton emphasized that their information is anecdotal only at this point.

Several B.C. economists have warned the program will have the effect of further inflating property values in Metro Vancouver, and could put some buyers at risk.

But it's too early to tell how much impact the program is having on B.C.'s housing market, said Bryan Yu, an economist with Central 1 Credit Union. The current 340 applications represent just five to six per cent of overall transactions across the province in the same time period.

Yu expects detached houses to continue to fall in price.

"The foreign buyer tax did do a number on that market and we'll continue to see some price declines," he said. But he expects condo prices to rise.

Despite accounts of multiple offers being made on some condo units, Saretsky is sceptical that the condo market is heating up. Prices have regained the ground they lost between June and December, when the entire market was cooling.

But multiple bids are happening because the number of condos listed is low.

"There are five or six offers because there's no inventory," he said. "Sales are still down 25 per cent — I don't think there's as much steam as everybody thinks."

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No 'hot coffee' lawsuit redux

COURT

Judge doesn't buy distorted cup theory in Starbucks case

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Remember the 1994 "hot coffee" lawsuit that saw a U.S. jury order McDonald's to pay a coffee-burn victim $2.86 million in damages?

Turns out Starbucks could have had its own "hot tea" moment in Canada — except in the Sechelt, B.C. case, a provincial court judge tossed out a local woman's lawsuit that had steeped for 17 months.

On Feb. 1, judge Steven Merrick dismissed a tea-burn lawsuit filed by Shayla Williams, who received second- and third-degree burns to her "left thigh and gluteal area," she testified, after "the lid popped off" a cup of tea she'd ordered from a Starbucks drive-through — served at 86 C, the company testified.

"Understandably, Ms. Williams was in significant pain," Merrick ruled. "Despite my sympathy for the claimant who clearly suffered extremely painful burns, it is my judgment that she has not proven her case against the defendant."

Filed in 2015, two years after the Sept. 30, 2013 incident, Williams' lawsuit bore some similarities to a 1994 lawsuit in which a jury found McDonald's was negligent in serving its coffee between 82 C and 88 C, ordering massive punitive damages that sparked Republican efforts to curb what conservatives saw as frivolous litigation and excessive jury awards.

> **Tea is expected to be served hot.**
> Judge Steven Merrick

Less widely reported in the U.S. case — thanks to a corporate public relations campaign — was the fact that the 79-year-old victim, Stella Liebeck, had been hospitalized with third-degree burns for eight days and forced to have skin transplants, after receiving burns to 22 per cent of her body.

In Williams' Sechelt case, a Starbucks witness testified that outlets heat their water to 93C, and hold and serve it at 86C. Like in the McDonald's lawsuit, both companies argued their water temperatures were industry standard, that customers expect their hot beverages to be hot, and that the claimants were to blame for spilling their own drinks.

But Williams "believed that she was burned because the tea was so hot that it distorted the cup," Merrick wrote in his Feb. 1 ruling, "causing the lid to become loose and fall off the cup.

"She says when that happened, the cup lost its structural rigidity causing the tea to come up and over the top of the cup and onto her."

But after four days of hearings starting last November, the B.C. judge concluded he didn't buy her story, even when she presented as evidence the supposedly "distorted" cup.

A B.C. Provincial Court judge has tossed out a lawsuit by a Sechelt woman who received second- and third-degree burns after a lid allegedly popped off her Starbucks' tea. GETTY IMAGES

"I am unable, by looking at it, to conclude it distorted as suggested," he wrote. "It is more likely that Ms. Williams either dropped the cup or knocked off the lid as she was removing the seat belt and/or attempting to pick up her purse, open the car door, and get out of the car while holding one or both drinks in her hands."

In dismissing her lawsuit, Merrick issued a warning to other tea and coffee drinkers at the drive-through: Restaurants "may serve tea that is hot enough to burn skin," he advised. "Tea is expected to be served hot … she was expecting hot tea."

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We're sixth-most mindful

GLOBAL AWARENESS

Index by World Economic Forum likes Vancouver

David P. Ball
Metro | Vancouver

Forget Vancouverites' reputation as thoughtless drivers.

That's because we can now take solace that our West Coast haven has meditated its way onto the list of the world's "most mindful" cities, at least according to a new index developed by the highly regarded World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

Sure to inflame often pejorative stereotypes of Vancouver as "Lotusland," the city earned sixth place in the global top 10 ranking of cities, on a list dominated by Nordic nation communities.

We even beat out what is arguably the world's marijuana-and-social-tolerance capital, Amsterdam.

Kundalini yoga teacher Katrina Prescott at Sunset Beach.
JENNIFER GAUTHIER / METRO FILE

"The ranking analyzes various attributes," explained the Forum's head of infrastructure and urban development, Michael Buehler, in a web posting, "such as social tolerance, civic engagement, work-life balance, quality of healthcare, life expectancy, safety, ecological footprint and income levels."

Defining "mindfulness" as a heightened "moment-to-moment non-judgemental awareness, cultivated by paying attention," the index examined cities with low levels of noise and pollution, lower population stress levels, increased feelings of well-being or happiness, "social tolerance, civic engagement, work-life balance, quality of healthcare, life expectancy, safety, ecological footprint and income levels," the study reported.

Last week, Metro reported on another survey that suggested British Columbians are the "laziest workers in Canada," with 27 per cent of workers saying they feel unmotivated at work, according to a Monster Canada poll. However, B.C. residents also scored high for a healthier work-life balance.

To create the mindfulness index, Buehler and co-creator Kayo Hirano — the Forum's community lead for infrastructure industries — compiled data from the World Health Organization, World Bank development indicators, United Nations' World Happiness Report, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Gallup's World Poll, and the Economist Intelligence Unit's Most Liveable Cities index.

Cities, they wrote, "can significantly contribute to the well-being of their citizens by inspiring and enabling mindful practices," and "create a resilient physique, personality, culture and relationship with its citizens, all of which amount to a more mindful environment."

The overall winner, worldwide?

It's Denmark's second-largest city, Aarhus, with a population of just more than 300,000 and ambitions to become completely carbon-neutral by 2030.

TOP 10

World's most mindful cities, as determined by World Economic Forum

1. Aarhus, Denmark
2. Lucerne, Switzerland
3. Reykjavik, Iceland
4. Bergen, Norway
5. Turku, Finland
6. Vancouver, Canada
7. Amsterdam, Netherlands
8. Auckland, New Zealand
9. Adelaide, Australia
10. Malmo, Sweden

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

B.C. aims to soften tax blow

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

The B.C. government is ready to sit down with the City of Vancouver to talk about how to help the many small businesses that have been hit this year with extraordinarily high property assessment increases.

The Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development and the Ministry of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction will meet with the City of Vancouver and the Urban Development Institute in the next two weeks "to better understand the concerns and examine current and potential mitigation tools," according to government staffers.

Property assessments for Business Improvement Areas — the retail districts that anchor Vancouver's neighbourhoods — normally rise between five and 10 per cent. This year the average increase for BIAs was 40 per cent.

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Vancouver tops rental cost list

HOUSING

One-bedroom unit in the city costs almost $2K per month

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

Vancouver renters looking for a one-bedroom unit need to fork over almost $2,000 every month on average, according to January 2017 data from PadMapper, a rental-listings website.

The second-most expensive city for rentals was Toronto, where people can rent a one-bedroom for almost $300 less per month.

But that city is experiencing a sharp increase in rental prices, with averages going up by five per cent in just one month.

An average one-bedroom rental in Vancouver in January 2017 cost $1,900, a 1.6 per cent increase from the previous month, according to the PadMapper report.

That price point is the highest it has ever been in the country since June 2016, when PadMapper first started analyzing rental data.

But people willing to live an hour outside Vancouver can pay half the amount.

It's $800 to rent an average one-bedroom unit in Abbotsford, according to PadMapper.

But there is some good news for Vancouver renters, because the market for two-bedroom units cooled slightly with units going for a monthly average of $3,130, down 0.6 per cent from January.

Meanwhile, Victoria came in third place with a one-bedroom ,going for $1,290 a month.

Notable jumps in rent include both one- and two-bedroom units in Kelowna, where rates went up by four per cent and five per cent, respectively.

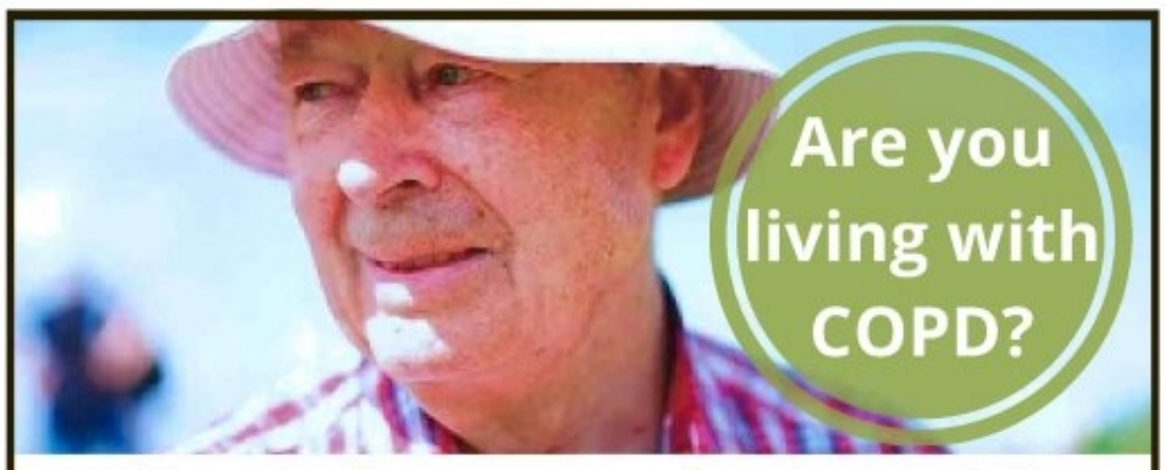
PadMapper compiles rental listings from across Canada every month, including about 1,000 from Vancouver alone to create its monthly rental reports.

The median price for a one-bedroom unit in Vancouver is $1,900 according to new numbers by PadMapper, far and away the highest in the country. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/METRO FILE

RENTAL COSTS IN CANADA

City	1-bedroom	% change in one month
Vancouver, BC	$1,900	1.60%
Toronto, ON	$1,620	4.50%
Victoria, BC	$1,290	1.60%
Montréal, QC	$1,180	4.40%
Ottawa, ON	$1,080	3.80%

SOURCE: PADMAPPER



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WILDLIFE

Young cougar killed following attack on conservation officer

Jeff Hodson
Metro | Vancouver

A B.C. conservation officer suffered minor injuries Tuesday night when he was attacked by a starving cougar near the West Kootenay town of Salmo.

The officer killed the cougar in the attack, said Chris Doyle, deputy chief of the B.C. Conservation Officer Service, adding that it was the first attack on an officer that he's encountered in his 23 years on the job.

The officer, who is based in Castlegar, was dealing with an injured cougar that had been struck by a pickup truck, when he was called about a young cougar trying to get into a house about 10 kilometres away near Salmo.

"While investigating this complaint, the officer was attacked without provocation by a juvenile cougar," Doyle said. "The conservation officer was forced to kill the cougar to stop the attack."

Doyle described the young male as "extremely emaciated.""

Tuesday's attack follows a spike in the number of cougar complaints, said Insp. Tobe Sprado, acting officer-in-charge for the Conservation Officer Service in the Kootenays.

Of the 14 complaints in and around Salmo since April 2016, 10 have occurred this February, Sprado said, something he attributed to deep snow conditions in the Kootenays.

"It's quite deep … It's loose snow. It makes it difficult for predators like cougars to prey efficiently on their normal prey," Sprado said. "(Cougars) start to come into communities looking for easier food source, generally dogs and cats."

The officer suffered only minor injuries and was back on the job Wednesday. Both Doyle and Sprado said such incidents are very rare and neither could recall a similar attack where a conservation officer was injured.

The Conservation Officer Service is investigating the attack, as it does for all animal attacks on humans in B.C.

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A former long-time Burger King employee was awarded $46,000 in damages for wrongful dismissal after she was turfed from her job in Vancouver for taking home about 50 cents' worth of food. SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Fired cook is awarded $46K

COURT

Ex-Burger King worker was let go for taking 50 cents' food

Jen St. Denis
Metro | Vancouver

A former Burger King cook has been awarded $46,000 in damages three years after her January 2014 dismissal for taking 50 cents' worth of food at the end of her shift.

A B.C. Supreme Court justice awarded Usha Ram $21,000 in lieu of notice (one year's salary) and an additional $25,000 in aggravated damages. Ram had asked for $230,000 in damages.

The case hinged on whether Ram was authorized to take a free fish sandwich, or a fish sandwich along with an order of fries and a pop, when she finished her shift at the Burger King location on Granville Street where she had worked for five years. Ram had worked at other Vancouver-area Burger Kings for a total of 24 years. At the time of her termination she was earning B.C.'s minimum wage of the time, $10.25 an hour.

Ram is originally from Fiji and her first language is a form of Hindi. According to court documents, at the end of her shift on Dec. 27, 2013, she asked her manager in Hindi if she could take home "a fish fry" (there is no word for sandwich in Hindi) and the manager gave her permission to do so. She packed up the sandwich, fries and pop in full view of the manager and left.

The following day, the manager waited to see whether Ram would pay for the fries and pop. When she didn't, she was called into the area manager's office and told she would be suspended for taking the food without paying. As she walked out of the restaurant, the owner of the franchise asked her, in the presence of other employees, whether she had lost her job. A few days later, she was fired over the phone.

The way Ram was dismissed caused her embarrassment and mental distress "over and above the normal distress and hurt feelings resulting from the termination of her employment," wrote Justice Lisa Warren in her Feb. 9 ruling.

"In particular, the theft allegation caused her shame, embarrassment, anxiety and distress about her ability to find another job and that this worsened her depressive symptoms and resulted in sleepless nights."

> **The theft allegation caused her shame, embarrassment.**
> Justice Lisa Warren

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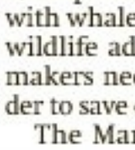

Wanyee Li
Metro | Vancouver

A new guide for ship crews aims to help vessels avoid collisions with whales in B.C. waters but wildlife advocates say policy-makers need to step up in order to save endangered species.

The Mariners' Guide, created in partnership with Port Vancouver and Port of Prince Rupert, recommends that ships slow down by 10 knots in order to reduce the chance of collision.

> **We need to reduce the impact as much as possible.**
> Andrew Dumbrille

The guide aims to protect marine animals and includes tips on how to identify the different whales found off B.C.'s coast.

"We need to reduce the impact as much as possible between ships and whales," said Andrew Dumbrille, senior specialist in sustainable shipping at WWF Canada.

"Mariner guides are a good tool to educate and bring awareness around these issues, but the next step is regulation and for enforcement of that regulation."

There were 30 reported collisions between whales and boats in B.C. from 2004 to 2011, according to the guide. But the actual number of collisions is likely higher because crews on large vessels are less likely to detect a collision, especially if the whale is small, the guide adds.

A necropsy done on an endangered southern resident orca that was found near the Sunshine Coast in December 2016 showed it suffered blunt-force trauma before dying.

Other endangered species that live along B.C.'s coast include the blue whale, sei whale, north Pacific right whale, and leatherback sea turtle, according to Vancouver Aquarium's guide for mariners.

Dumbrille, who helped put together a similar guide for ships travelling through the Hudson Strait in Canada's Arctic, says slowing down not only helps ships avoid colliding into whales, it also reduces underwater noise pollution. Ship-traffic noise affects whales because they use echolocation to navigate, hunt, and communicate with each other, he explained.

"It really disrupts foraging, calving, and social habitat of whales. They just can't hear and they can't communicate."

There have been at least 30 collisions between whales and vessels in B.C. from 2004 to 2011, according to the Vancouver Aquarium's mariners guide. CONTRIBUTED

Dumbrille applauded a Port of Vancouver initiative that reduces port fees for crews who reduce the noise their vessels make as they approach the harbour. The Port of Vancouver also maintains underwater microphones that provide data to researchers studying the effect noise pollution has on whales.

With the looming threat of increased tanker traffic along B.C.'s coast due to the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, wildlife advocates have called for restrictions on oil tankers.

But large ships are a reality for many communities, Dumbrille pointed out. He wants Transport Canada to create 'quiet zones' in certain parts of the ocean important to whale populations. The authority should also enforce speed limits in those areas, he said.

"It's not like we can do without shipping," he said.

"We just have to do it right and put in the right rules."

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I along with some of my colleagues, have been the recipients of hateful comments. This strengthens my resolve to continue to combat this issue.
MP Iqra Khalid

Member of Parliament Iqra Khalid is congratulated by colleagues as she makes an announcement about an anti-Islamophobia motion on Parliament Hill on Wednesday. PATRICK DOYLE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Liberals strongly back anti-Islamophobia bill

PARLIAMENT

Motion calls for action against 'climate of hate and fear'

The Liberal government is coming out strongly in favour of a motion to condemn Islamophobia and all other forms of racism and religious discrimination.

Heritage Minister Melanie Joly said passing the non-binding motion would send a strong message about discrimination against the Muslim community, particularly in light of the recent deadly attack on a mosque in Quebec City.

"We overwhelmingly reject the politics of racism and exclusion," Joly said Wednesday outside the House of Commons.

She was surrounded by Liberal MPs — including several cabinet ministers — as a strong show of support, and a signal of her confidence that despite this being a free vote, there would not be anyone in the Liberal caucus who is expected to stand against it.

"Our government is committed to building a diverse, inclusive and welcoming society that promotes respect for all, regardless of faith, race or ethnicity."

The private member's motion, put forward by Liberal MP Iqra Khalid, calls on the government to "recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear" and condemn Islamophobia, as well as all other kinds of "systemic racism and religious discrimination."

The Commons heritage committee would also be asked to study the issue and develop a strategy to tackle it.

A number of Conservative MPs have called for the motion to be more inclusive, warning it risks stifling freedom of expression by preventing criticism of elements of Islam or Muslim culture, such as the face-covering veil known as the niqab.

Both Joly and Khalid insisted the motion would not touch on freedom of expression.

Khalid, a Muslim, said her own experience with Islamophobia over the past few weeks has convinced her to press ahead. THE CANADIAN PRESS

ALBERTA

Closure to upend town

A study commissioned by a town in eastern Alberta suggests the closure of a federal immigration processing centre would be economically devastating.

Vegreville would suffer a permanent drop in population, lower property values and higher unemployment if the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Case Processing Centre moves to Edmonton, says the report.

The report suggests Vegreville could lose up to 420 people, or 7.3 per cent of the population, and the town believes about 130 students would be lost from local schools. It could also lead to a 30 per cent decrease in home prices.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

150 WAYS of looking at Canada

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ACTIVISM!

Part of massive cross-country action to show their value

Organizers in cities across the U.S. are telling immigrants to miss class, miss work and not shop on Thursday as a way to show the country how important they are to America's economy and way of life.

"A Day Without Immigrants" actions are planned in cities including Philadelphia, Washington, Boston and Austin, Texas.

The protest comes in response to President Donald Trump and his 1-month-old administration. The Republican president has pledged to increase deportation of immigrants living in the country illegally, build a wall along the Mexican border, and ban people from certain majority-Muslim countries from coming into the U.S. He also has blamed high unemployment on immigration.

Protesters gather in Milwaukee, Wisc. to rally against President Donald Trump's policy on immigration. Organizers are telling immigrants to skip class, miss work and not shop Thursday. GETTY

Employers and institutions in some cities were already expressing solidarity Wednesday with immigrant workers.

Washington restaurateur John Andrade said he would close his businesses Thursday, and David Suro, owner of Tequilas Restaurant in Philadelphia and a Mexican immigrant, said he also planned to participate.

The Davis Museum at Wellesley College in Massachusetts said it would remove or shroud all artwork created or given by immigrants to the museum through Feb. 21.

In New Mexico, the state with the largest percentage of Hispanic residents in the nation, school officials worried that hundreds of students may stay home on Thursday.

"We respectfully ask all parents to acknowledge that students need to be in class every day to benefit from the education they are guaranteed and to avoid falling behind in school and life," principals with the Albuquerque Public Schools wrote in a letter to parents.

Students who take part in the protest will receive an unexcused absence, Albuquerque school officials said.

Organizers in Philadelphia said they expect hundreds of workers and families to participate.

"Our goal is to highlight the need for Philadelphia to expand policies that stop criminalizing communities of colour," said Erika Almiron, executive director of Juntos, a non-profit group that works with the Latino immigrant community. "What would happen if massive raids did happen? What would the city look like?"

Almiron said that while community groups have not seen an uptick in immigration raids in the city, residents are concerned about the possibility.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LABOUR

American workers enter a 'dark period'

A review of the U.S. Department of Labor's website revealed that multiple posts about protecting precarious workers, enforcing labour laws, and cracking down on wage theft have vanished.

"If we have been living in an overcast period for working people in the U.S., we are about to enter into a dark, dark period," said California-based workers' rights advocate Carmen Rojas.

There are notable disappearances, including an executive order that lifted the minimum wage of federal contractors to $10.10 an hour — a move that provided an estimated 200,000 low-wage workers with a raise. Numerous links to Department of Labor blog posts also appeared to be broken, specifically on issues related to wage theft, enforcement, and employee misclassification — the practice of wrongly classifying workers as independent contractors to avoid legal obligations like paying minimum wage.

All three areas were championed under Obama in an effort to better protect vulnerable workers. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ISRAEL

Trump charts new course for Middle East

President Donald Trump on Wednesday withheld clear support for an independent Palestine and declared he could endorse a one-nation solution to the long and deep dispute between Palestinians and Israel.

The American president, signalling a new era of comity between the U.S. and Israel after rocky relations under President Barack Obama, said he was more interested in an agreement that leads to peace than in any particular path to get there.

While Trump urged Netanyahu to "hold off" on Jewish settlement construction in territory the Palestinians claim for their future state, he offered unwavering support for Israel.

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sets off on a trip to address the European Parliament. ADRIAN WYLD / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada and EU hail deal

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PM in Europe to address Parliament on Thursday

Lawmakers in Canada and Europe are hailing Wednesday's approval of the Canada-EU free trade deal by the European Parliament as a win for the values of openness in the face of anti-trade movements, including the Donald Trump administration in the United States.

The legislature in Strasbourg, France, approved the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement by a margin of 408-254, with 33 abstentions. The vote clears a major hurdle for the deal that saw its first round of bargaining almost eight years ago and has had to overcome mounting anti-trade populism in Europe.

Canada's Parliament also is expected to ratify the deal in the coming months, which means 90 per cent of it would come into force under provisional application.

That key procedural step allows the deal to take effect without the ratification of the European Union's 28 member countries and numerous regional governments.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was en route to France to deliver his own pro-trade message in an address Thursday to the European Parliament, a first for a Canadian leader, and to top business leaders a day later in Germany.

On his way into a caucus meeting earlier Wednesday, Trudeau sang the praises of the deal as evidence of the merits of globalization.

"I think it's an illustration that when you put forward a progressive trade deal that takes into account the responsibility of governments to create good middle-class jobs, create inclusive growth — not just for a few, but for everyone — (and) that focuses on the middle class, we can move forward on globalization."

International Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne, who was already in Strasbourg ahead of the vote, called it "the right deal at the right time."

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom took direct aim at anti-globalization forces in remarks to Parliament.

"With Canada we share the democratic values of tolerance and openness. We co-operate in tackling common challenges such as migration, sustainable development, climate change and terrorism," Malmstrom said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Check your Yahoo account

Yahoo is warning users of potentially malicious activity on their accounts between 2015 and 2016, the latest development in the company's probe of a mega-breach that exposed 1 billion users' data several years ago.

Yahoo confirmed Wednesday that it was notifying users that their accounts had potentially been compromised.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEDIA

Google calls plan 'tax on advertisers'

Proposals for tax changes aimed at helping Canadian publishers fight for revenues with online news aggregators would result in a punitive "tax on advertisers," executives from Google Canada and Facebook Canada told a Commons committee studying the country's media industry.

That's because tax laws currently on the books designed to prop up the industry are archaic and simply don't apply to the Internet age, Jason Kee, Google Canada's head of policy and government relations, told the heritage committee Tuesday.

Kee said he had concerns over how such changes would be implemented.

"Long story short, it's essentially a tax on Canadian advertisers," he said.

A report by former journalist Edward Greenspon, commissioned by the Department of Heritage and unveiled late last month, called on Ottawa to consider changing tax laws to favour Canadian news publishers in the digital advertising market and use the new revenue stream to establish an independent, publicly subsidized journalism fund.

The independent think-tank Public Policy Forum recommended that advertising with foreign-owned websites no longer be deductible under the federal Income Tax Act.

The report said that, by extending a 10 per cent withholding tax to commercials and advertising carried by foreign digital media, the government could create a revenue stream of up to $400 million annually.

Kee said that assumes a direct relationship between an advertiser and a publisher that doesn't exist in the digital world, but does for traditional media under a policy dating from the 1960s.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Compass
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PHILOSOPHER CAT by Jason Logan

CHANTAL HÉBERT ON SECULAR DRESS CODES

A Montreal philosopher co-authored a report nine years ago that recommended imposing a secular dress code. The mosque shooting now has him regretting that suggestion.

Almost a decade ago, Montreal philosopher Charles Taylor — one of Canada's leading intellectuals — co-presided over a provincial commission on religious accommodation that recommended, among other measures, that Quebec impose a secular dress code on the province's judges and police forces.

In so doing, he and historian/sociologist Gérald Bouchard inadvertently planted the seeds of Quebec's decade-long fixation on religious vestments in general and the Muslim veil in particular.

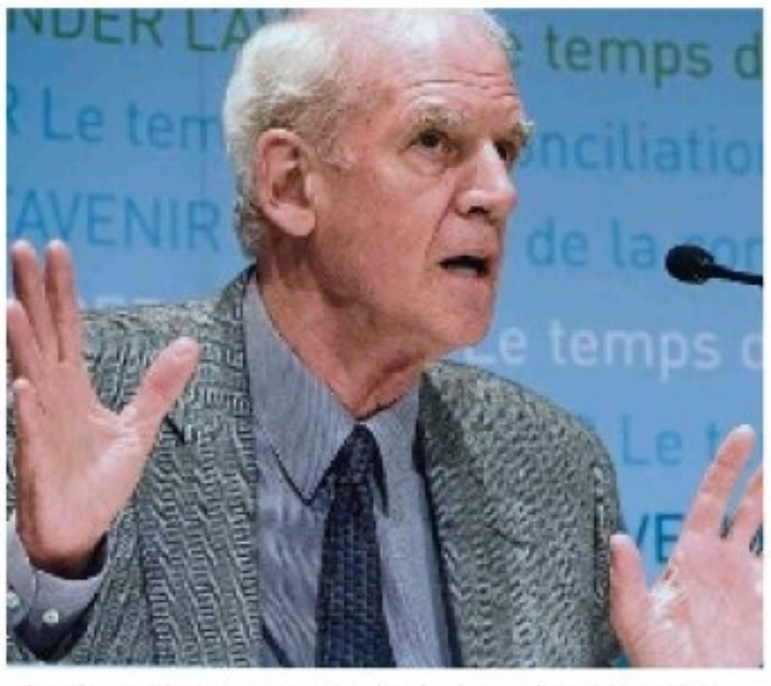
Some of those seeds eventually found their way elsewhere in Canada, most notably in the shape of the debate on the place of the niqab at citizenship ceremonies at the time of the last federal election.

The Bouchard-Taylor report was more than 300 pages long and most of its recommendations dealt with measures designed to nurture a pluralistic society. But it was the notion of a government-imposed ban on religious signs that stuck with the public.

The imprimatur of two leading thinkers freed part of Quebec's chattering and political classes to jump on the dress code bandwagon and advocate restrictions on individual religious expression that would have been unthinkable prior to the report.

Taylor and Bouchard prescribed a ban on religious signs for people invested, by virtue of their positions, with coercive powers. In the rhetoric of the Coalition Avenir Québec and the Parti Québécois, that came to mean anyone in a position of authority. And even that term soon lost any semblance of meaning.

In the PQ's defunct secularism charter, a secular dress code would have been imposed on anyone on the public payroll, from clerks to nurses to doctors to child-care workers.



After the Quebec mosque attack, Charles Taylor reversed his support for a secular dress code in Quebec . THE CANADIAN PRESS

Neither academic had such blanket restrictions in mind when they wrote their report. On various occasions, both tried to set the record straight.

Now Taylor has gone a step further. In an op-ed piece published in La Presse earlier this week, he urged Quebec's political class to put back in the bottle the genie he and Bouchard let out. In hindsight, he wrote, he wishes he had left the bottle uncorked.

Taylor says he never did believe that a prohibition on religious signs, be it on those who sit on the court benches or wear a police uniform, was necessarily in keeping with Quebec's secular character.

In his op-ed, it comes across as little more than a bone thrown to the many Quebecers who felt their identity was threatened by expressions of religious diversity. The proposal had more to do with marketing than actual values.

Taylor writes that he thought the recommendation would help a majority of Quebecers buy in to the more positive prescriptions of the report.

The opposite, of course, happened. Even with the best of intentions, opportunism is not a substitute for principles.

Taylor also predicts that should the national assembly ever put the restrictions on religious signs he once advocated into law, the courts would throw them out.

That, too, is a bit of a stunning admission.

Over the past decade, there has not been in Canada a substantial court ruling that would infirm or affirm Taylor's doubts as to the legal standing of the proposal he is recanting. In other words, if he believes it would probably not survive a charter challenge now, he would have had cause to suspect as much at the time of the writing of the report.

Taylor said it was the attack on a Quebec mosque two weeks ago that prompted his public reversal. In the aftermath of that attack, the parties in the national assembly essentially resumed the debate over religious accommodation where they had left off. Arguing that a majority of Quebecers back the dress code restrictions of the Bouchard-Taylor report, the opposition parties have been pressuring the Liberal government to pass them into law.

Taylor believes that the public goodwill that has resulted from the mosque tragedy will be squandered if Quebec's political class does not switch its focus from debating how far to restrict the rights of religious minorities to the building of more bridges with the Muslim community.

Predictably, since he reversed his position, Taylor has been vilified on social media. Some have called him a Liberal sellout; others accuse him of being a fundamentalist.

It took courage for Taylor to repudiate a notion that has driven Quebec's identity debate for the best part of a decade. Still one cannot help but regret that he did not exhibit that courage nine years ago, at the time of the co-writing of the report that bears his name.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer. Her column appears in Metro every Thursday.

The choice is hers Rachel Lindsay is the next Bachelorette, the first black lead in the show's history. WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC.

Reality TV gets real

Vicky Mochama
Metro

After 13 seasons of ignoring it, I am now a massive fan of television's longest-running arranged marriage scheme, The Bachelorette. This is because the newest bachelorette is Rachel Lindsay, a black female attorney.

It doesn't even air until May 22 and I can conclusively say it is the best show on television. And not only did ABC announce this during Black History Month, but — it can't be coincidence — the new season also premieres on my birthday. Fate has foretold the greatness of this show.

Even though it's in the vapid confines of The Bachelorette, it is still awesome to see many men vying for a black woman's attention and love. Yet it is telling about the state of the world that the producers, looking for ways to shake up the show, landed on "What if she was a black?"

Like using bad olive oil, it is offensive but not egregious. It suggests there's something incredibly wild and risky about dating a black woman. (I mean, there is, but that is because black women are incredible! Not because we are like feral animals in the outback.)

At the same time: finally.

This show has been on for 12 seasons! Black people have been around for much longer!

Although there have been black contestants on both The Bachelor and Bachelorette, Lindsay included, they've never been the ones doing the choosing. And since the show's inception in 2002, they never got chose either.

Black women who are dating are statistically less likely to be picked. According to data from OkCupid founder Christian Rudder, men on the website find black women the least desirable group.

In a cover feature for The Walrus, Hadiya Roderique experimented with the idea by alternating her OkCupid profile between her actual pictures, pictures of a white woman, and a "whitened" version of herself. As a white woman, she received far more messages than when she presented as herself, a black woman.

This jives with my own dating experience. The first time I quit Tinder was because the messages I received were hyper-sexualized and racialized. The former is part of the appeal of the app to some, but for me the combination just created a digitized version of the racist sexual harassment I experience in real life.

(I am back on again with some rules — e.g. if the other person says something even remotely racial, I hit that unmatch button faster than Usain Bolt sprints.)

For black women, the romantic fairy tale told by popular culture hasn't included us. That is why I will be watching The Bachelorette when Rachel Lindsay finds her Prince Harry.

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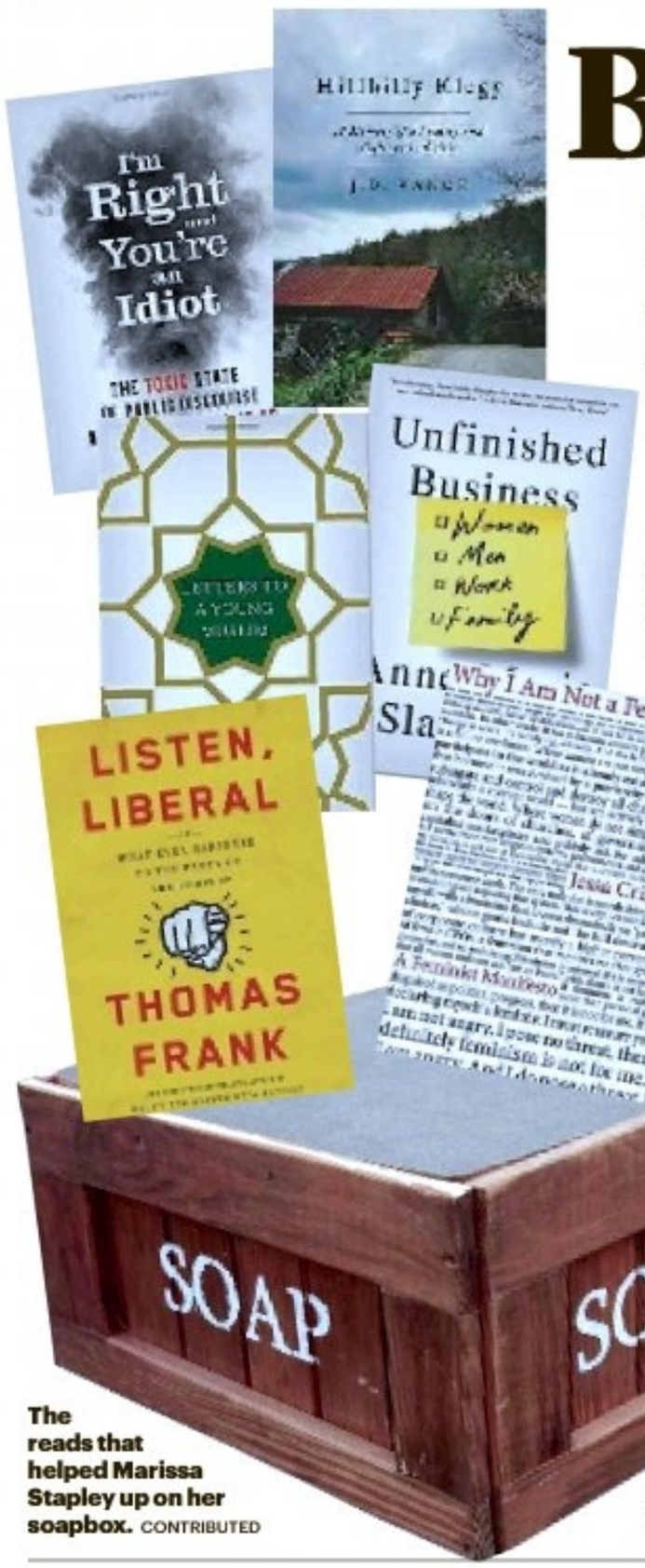
metro LIFE
METRO FOCUS ACTIVISM!
Your essential daily news
Thursday, February 16, 2017

Actress-producer Krysten Ritter is becoming a novelist. Crown Archetype said that it had acquired Ritter's Bonfire, a psychological thriller about an environmental lawyer and a company accused of dumping toxic chemicals.

Books for bitter times



The reads that helped Marissa Stapley up on her soapbox. CONTRIBUTED

TAKING ISSUES

Put the phone away and open up to genuinely alternative facts

Marissa Stapley
Torstar News Service

In a world where facts and truth are becoming collateral damage, I've been speaking out even more than usual, and I'm not alone. There's an anger being awakened in all of us.

For me, that means having pointless arguments online with people I went to elementary school with and will probably never see again, and harsh, politically charged arguments with close family members. None of this has been rewarding, and it certainly hasn't changed anything. But what will?

I realized recently that in order to find that out, I needed to shut down my computer, look away from my phone and turn to the place within which I've always sought knowledge and comfort: books.

Debate

In **I'm Right and You're an Idiot** (New Society, 272 pages, $19.95) Canadian public relations guru turned author and activist James Hoggan writes: "In debate we assume we have the right answer, whereas dialogue assumes we all have pieces of the answer and can craft a solution together.

"Debate is combative and about winning, while dialogue is collaborative and focuses on exploring the common good. Debaters defend their assumptions and criticize the views of others, whereas in dialogue we reveal assumptions and examine all positions, including our own."

To that end, here's what I've been reading lately to find ways to constructively support what I already value and believe and to open my mind to the beliefs of others. Plus, I needed to find a way to stop shouting so much.

Liberalism

Listen, Liberal (Thomas Frank, Metropolitan Books, 320 pages, $31.50) takes on the democratic elite. As Canada awakens to how very like the U.S. we may be, questioning liberal values with an eye to both defending them and improving them, as well as truly understanding what it means to be elitist, is an uncomfortable necessity.

Classism

So, what's the opposite of a member of the liberal elite? **Hillbilly Elegy** (J.D. Vance, Harper, 272 pages, $34.99) has the answer to that. Vance was raised in the Rust Belt by a drug-addicted mother and then in the Appalachians by guardian grandparents who struggled with alcoholism and violence.

They loved him fiercely. His story puts a face to the white underclass who have become so outspoken in today's political arena. There's a lot to grapple with in a book like this but it's a good place to start when trying to understand what's going on in communities you may not identify with — and it makes it clear that speaking out from within, in any community, is the only way forward.

Religion

Next, I read **Letters to a Young Muslim**, by Omar Saif Ghobash (Picador; 272 pages, $31). This book is meant as a plea for moderation from an author who has clearly listened deeply and wants to speak the truth, gently and respectfully.

He's also writing to his sons, which ups the ante. No shouting allowed. Those arguing with the most fierceness — on both sides — about immigration bans and extremism may know nothing about what it means to be a Muslim or what Islam is. This is just a starting point, and a fine one at that.

Feminism

Now, on to feminism. I've been a feminist practically since I could speak in full sentences but never before have I felt on one hand so supported and on the other so opposed.

I've read plenty of books that support what I already think, but **Unfinished Business** by Anne Slaughter (Random House, 352 pages, $32) reminded me that this word "equality" I keep using might not mean what I think it does — and she bravely offers up a manifesto for true equality.

Why I Am Not A Feminist by Jessa Crispin (Melville House, 176 pages, $33.99) comes from an author who has created an identity out of being a contrarian, true, but who also demands more of mainstream feminism than it's currently delivering. (She is indeed looking directly at all of us in our cute pink pussy hats.)

Conservatism

This is all just a beginning. I'm still searching — and late this week, my search led me to the Little Free Library on my street. And there it was, a battered volume called **Confessions of a Conservative**.

When I got it home, I realized it was written in 1979 by Pulitzer-Prize winning author Garry Wills. Wills is a Roman Catholic who has criticized the approach of the church to homosexuality, abortion and contraception. He once wrote an article for The New York Review of Books that took on the second amendment. He no longer calls himself a conservative, mostly because of his experiences covering the civil rights movement, for example — but also because the conservatives won't have him.

Wills was brave, both to stand for something and then to abandon it when listening to the other side led him to a new way of seeing. I'm planning to stay open to this, no matter where my current quest for balanced knowledge leads me.

Courage, as well as a stack of books, is imperative.

INTERVIEW

Imagining a techno-utopian paradise from back in the 1950s

Sue Carter
For Metro Canada

Growing up, Elan Mastai was fascinated by his grandfather's collection of vintage science-fiction novels from the postwar era. He loved the stories contained within their brittle yellow pages, but especially the book covers.

He remembers staring at the garish illustrations of space adventurers, moon bases and flying cars. But even as a kid of the '80s, Mastai was already aware that the world had not exactly turned out the way these authors had imagined it. He remembers asking himself: "What happened to the future we were promised?"

Mastai's childhood fascination would never completely disappear, and later would become the genesis for his debut novel, All Our Wrong Todays, a humorous but prescient tale set in an alternative, utopian version of 2016, where war and famine — and even browning avocados — don't exist.

The story is told from the perspective of Tom Barren, the slacker son of a genius inventor who developed a time machine. After lust gets the best of Tom and he sleeps with the wrong person, his actions create a domino effect and he is catapulted into a dystopian universe that is recognizable as our own world. There, Tom discovers another version of himself and his loved ones, and must decide where he wants to live.

Initially, Toronto-based, Vancouver-raised screenwriter Mastai conceived All Our Wrong Todays as a film but realized he wanted to tell this story as a faux memoir.

It would become the hot ticket at the 2015 Frankfurt Book Fair, boasting a seven-figure deal and sales in 27 countries. "I had no anticipation of the response we were going to get," he says. "It's not something I thought about. It was gratifying but mind-blowing."

Although Mastai was influenced by his early memories of his grandfather's books, and his visits to Expo 86 in Vancouver — the last World Fair to be hosted in North America — he didn't draw from specific sources, but rather the feelings inspired by those collective cultural touchstones.

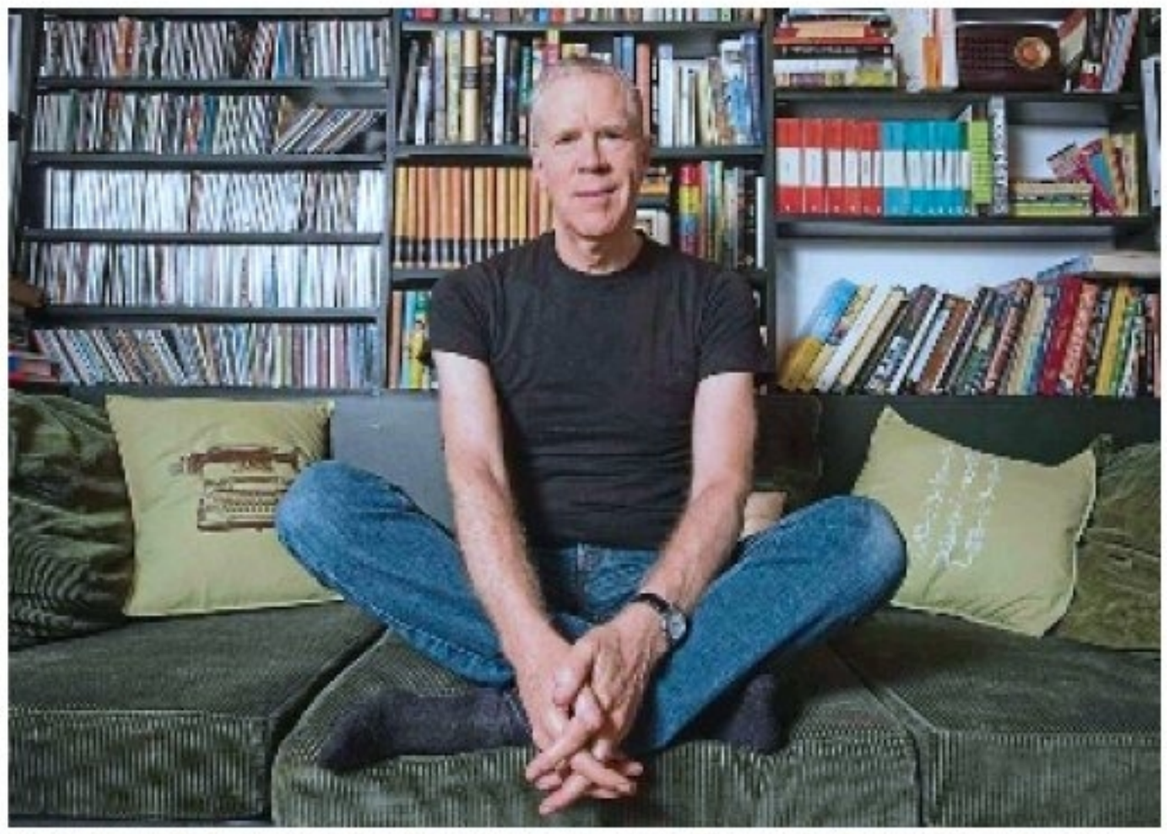
The book is filtered through a postwar perspective; an imagining of what a "techno-utopian paradise" would look like to someone in the 1950s.

"There would be certain social things that would seem odd to us now," Mastai says. "They have a different relationship with authority, with consumerism, gender roles play out differently. They didn't go through a lot of the political and social upheavals that we went through in the '60s, '70s and '80s."

Sue Carter is the editor at Quill & Quire magazine.

Elan Mastai imagines the mundanities of daily life in a futuristic setting. CONTRIBUTED

The man who connected us



Humorist, radio host and author Stuart McLean was an officer of the Order of Canada and a professor emeritus at Ryerson University in Toronto. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

OBITUARY

Tributes pour in for beloved Vinyl Cafe host Stuart McLean

Stuart McLean, a bestselling author, journalist and humorist who was "firmly committed to celebrating the positive, joyful and funny side of life" through his popular CBC Radio program The Vinyl Cafe, has died. He was 68.

"We were deeply saddened to learn that Stuart McLean passed away earlier today. Stuart was an exceptional storyteller who has left an indelible mark on CBC Radio and countless communities across Canada," read a statement from Susan Marjetti, executive director of radio and audio for CBC English Services.

In December, McLean announced he was suspending the long-running program to focus on treatment for melanoma, which he was diagnosed with in late 2015. He said his first round of immunotherapy treatment that winter was not completely successful and he needed to undergo another round this year.

The Vinyl Cafe radio show, which featured a mix of stories, essays and musical performances, was spun off into bestselling books and became a touring production in 2008. The show's stories centred on Dave, the owner of a secondhand record store, and also featured Dave's wife, Morley, their two children, Sam and Stephanie, and various friends.

> **His Dave and Morley stories made us pause, reflect, but most of all laugh along together**
> CBC's Susan Marjetti

"Every week for 22 years, Stuart connected with his listeners in a way that few before him have. His Dave and Morley stories were as entertaining as they were enlightening; they made us pause, reflect, but most of all laugh along together," said Marjetti.

A posting on the official Vinyl Cafe website said the staff behind the show were "finding comfort in memories of our dear friend."

"Stuart always emphasized that the world is a good place, full of good people, trying to do their best. He believed in people's extraordinary capacity for love and generosity. And he had faith in our ability to work together for the common good," the message reads.

"Stuart connected us — to our country and to each other. He entertained us, he made us think, he made us smile. Occasionally he made us cry. And, through all of that, he reminded us that life is made up of small moments. We never know which ones will be forgotten and which ones will stay with us forever."

McLean had been upbeat about his cancer setback and told fans in an online message posted in December that he expected to return to work.

"I don't want you to worry about me. A year ago I told you that I expected this to be just a bump in the road, not the end of the road. I still believe that to be true. I hope we will meet up again — on the radio or in theatres. We'll make sure to tell you before that happens," McLean wrote.

"In the meantime, look after yourselves and each other. And know that this isn't goodbye. It's just ... so long for now."

On Twitter, comedian Mark Critch of the CBC show This Hour Has 22 Minutes paid tribute to McLean. "I wrote several #StuartMaclean parodies for '22.' They were easy to write because I was such a fan of his work. I'll miss his Canada," Critch tweeted.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Suzanne Somers lists her 73-acre Palm Springs compound for $14.5M

MEET THE CONDO

Take in the view from the 41st floor

Project overview

Fulton House is a 41-storey high-rise with a total of 303 one and two bedroom apartments located in North Burnaby near Gilmore Station, in the Brentwood area. Prices start at $429,900, with homes that reach high enough for beautiful views of Downtown Vancouver and the North Shore.

Housing amenities

Residents are treated to gourmet kitchens, a gas barbecue hookup on the balcony and a large living space with eight-and-a-half-foot high ceilings. Nearby, home owners can swim in the pool, clean-up their pet at the dog-grooming station, or spend time in the 28,000 square foot indoor/outdoor fitness centre.

Location and transit

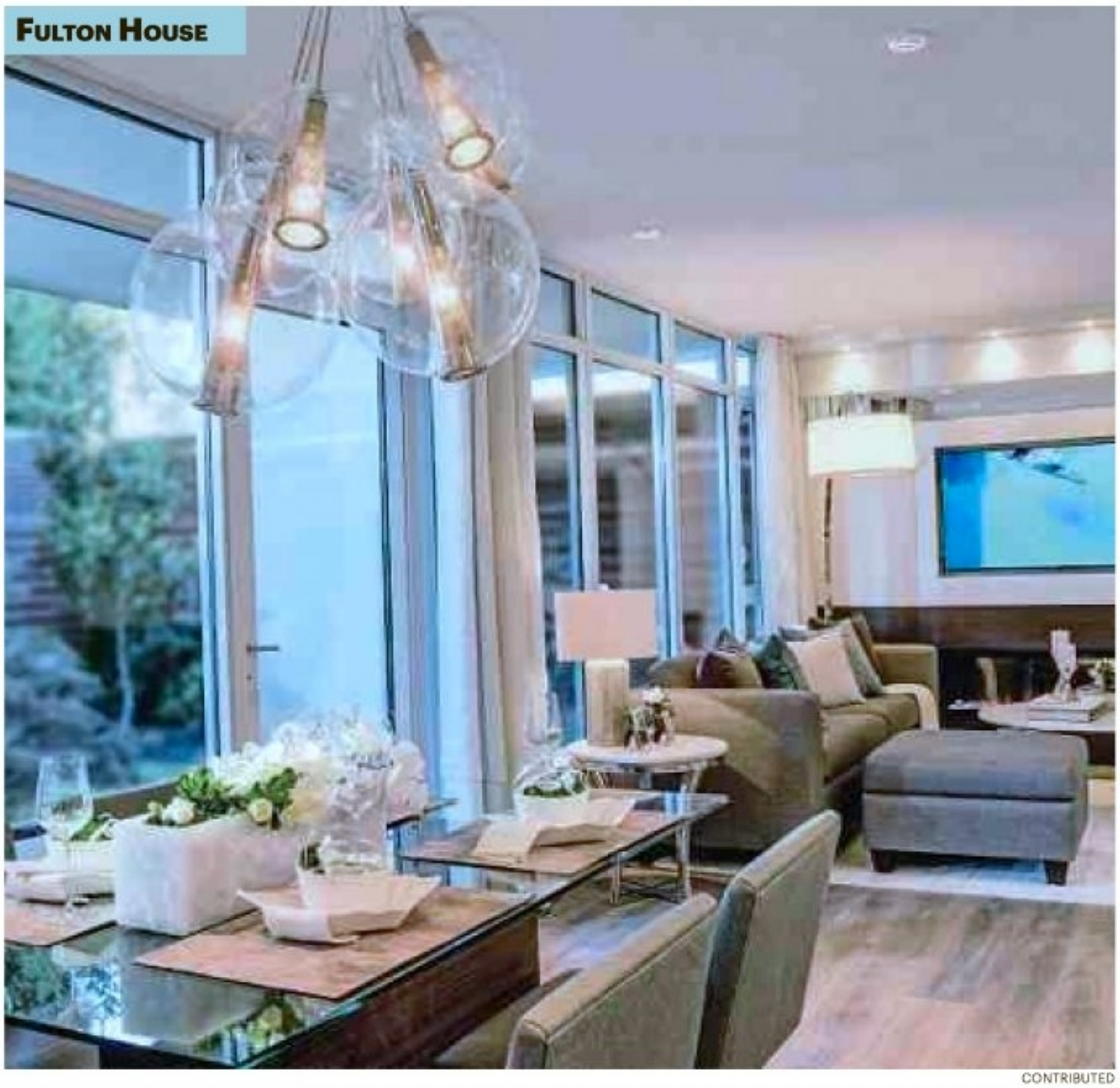
Residents can enjoy a short walk to Gilmore SkyTrain Station and reach Commercial Drive in 10 minutes, and downtown in 20. Head the other way to access New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody. Those with automobiles have quick access to Lougheed Highway and the No. 1.

In the neighbourhood

Brentwood is one of the most sought-after neighbourhoods in North Burnaby. From Fulton House it's a seven minute walk to Brentwood Shopping Centre and Whole Foods, and close enough to easily reach The Heights, which features many award-winning restaurants and mom and pop stores.

NEED TO KNOW

What: Fulton House
Developer: Polygon Fulton House Ltd.
Builder: TBD
Designer: Architecture by Buttjes Architecture, interiors by Polygon Interior Design Ltd.
Location: 2338 Madison Ave.
Building: 41-storey apartments
Sizes: Starting at 540 square feet
Model: One and two bedroom condos
Pricing: Starting at $423,900
Status: Presales
Occupancy: Contact sales centre
Sales centre: 2338 Madison Ave.
Phone: (604) 299-8573
Website: polyhomes.com



CONTRIBUTED

DÉCOR

Get your home red-carpet-ready with Badgley Mischka

Design duo Mark Badgley and James Mischka, known for show-stopping red-carpet gowns, are bringing the glamour of their fashion shows to a living room near you.

The designers describe their first-ever Badgley Mischka Home Collection, launched this week, as "couture furniture" infused with old Hollywood glamour.

"We love when a piece of furniture has a little bit of atmosphere to it, where it sort of harks back to the golden era of Hollywood. At the same time, it's our quest to keep every piece modern. So it's been a real luxury and a real treat to work on something besides a red-carpet ball gown," said Badgley during an exclusive sneak peek of the collection in Los Angeles. Badgley and Mischka also pulled inspiration straight from their runway collection, which they presented Feb. 14 during New York Fashion Week. Some of the furniture was used in the show.

"We used a lot of fabrics that were reminiscent of fabrics that we are using on the couture collection," said Mischka. "Our (fashion) collection is done with a lot of hand-beading and a lot of very intricate work on the couture gowns. And this collection also has handwork on it. All the finishes are distressed by hand. It's extremely labour intensive, which is very much like our couture gowns."

Their approach to designing for the dining room and the red carpet is the same: The devil is in the details.

"We were very involved, from sketching. We scoured Europe for fabrications. We flew in tiny little planes to the middle of nowhere where we could find the craftsmanship to execute certain processes. It was a real labour of love," Badgley said.

The collection ranges in price from $100 to $10,000 and includes accent pieces, beds, chairs, sofas, tables, cabinets, candles and artwork. It will be available on the designers' website and at Neiman Marcus. Colourful sketches of Badgley Mischka gowns were blown up and framed. Lush fabrics line a gold, zebra-print bench and a velvet octagonal coffee table. Like a dress with a wow moment on the back, there's a sleek, grey couch with striking geometric wood pattern only seen from behind.

Their favourite piece? A masculine, dark wood desk with gold detailing and curved architectural flair.

"It's very sensuous," Badgley said. "It's very simple. Nothing pretentious about it, but the finishings make it, and elevate it to such a couture piece.

"These pieces are timeless. James and I have never liked trendy pieces. We don't like trendy clothes. We certainly don't like trendy furniture. When James and I buy a piece, we want to know that it's going to be in the home for the next 20, 30, 40 years. And that, to us, is what this furniture stands for."

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The right steps to refinish stairways

HOME REPAIR

Contractors offer best tips on what can be a messy job

Stairs and stairways are often last on the list when it comes to home renovations, even though they are frequently the first thing you and everyone else sees upon opening the front door.

Although not prohibitively expensive, refurbishing stairs is a messy and skilled job beyond the reach of average DIYers. The basics, though, aren't hard to grasp and with a little help you can take the first steps to elevate your stairs.

Older homes, especially, will need stair repairs and upgrades, says Jordan Spear, a RenoMark contractor.

When it comes to restoring staircases, "the first thing is to look at the structure for safety," says Spear, who specializes in restoring century homes. "You want to make sure the treads aren't too worn and 'cupping,' and that the nosing is secure and that the railing is all secure and the components solid."

A staircase in a Toronto home before renovations. The place had previously served as a rooming house. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Refinishing and staining

First, assess the wood, says Chris Palmer, also a RenoMark contractor who was an industrial designer before appearing on TV shows such as Canada's Handyman Challenge, Income Property, Open House Overhaul and serving as Global TV's resident handyman expert.

Stairs made from good hardwood, such as oak or maple, are usually worth refinishing. Peel back a section of carpet or runner to check the wood. If it's low-grade pine or spruce (called "builder grade") then painting, capping or re-carpeting are the only options, says TV contractor Damon Bennett, another RenoMark contractor.

If you're lucky, you might need to just replace the most damaged treads. To refinish, remove the carpet and underpad, pull out all the staples, then fill and sand before painting or staining.

"You can't put water-based stains on oil-based stains, so make sure you get the right product," says Spear.

Capping

An alternative to re-carpeting is re-treading, or capping with new treads. Sometimes called false treads, they can sit on top of the existing ones. After that it's a matter of replacing or re-painting the risers.

Re-treading involves knocking out the existing treads. Replacing them and capping aren't as easy as it sounds, warn the renovators.

Capping will also change the rise of the step and you'll be short at the top and high at the bottom. Even just a half-inch difference can cause a stumble. There are veneer tread options in the $20-$30 range but the ideal is solid wood, at $30 and up, depending on the type of wood. Also, you'll either have to make your winders (the triangle-shaped larger treads that allow for a turn), or have them made.

To have a set of 14 stairs capped with red oak treads and risers, including three winders, (plus a corresponding new banister with new newels and spindles) will cost $5,000-6,000 — or more, depending on where you are, who does the work and how much labour is required.

Painting

With worn or low-grade stairs, aside from re-carpeting or capping, the other option is painting.

As with staining, prep is everything. Pull out all the staples, fill in the holes then sand, sand and sand again. A shop-vac attachment for your sander will help, as will sealing the work area with plastic sheeting. Wear a dust mask and eye protection.

Check out the pro-level painting stores such as Dulux, Sherwin-Williams or Benjamin Moore for their special tread paint that's water based and designed to take foot traffic. If there's a previous oil-based stain or paint on the stairs, you'll need a bonding and transition coat of primer.

A good paint supplier can match the paint to the trim or to the wall. Painting the treads a dark colour and the trim and risers in white is a popular look.

Railings, carpet and rods

If you're re-carpeting because the wood isn't worth refinishing, consider upgrading the entire look with new railings.

Do you replace wood spindles with wrought-iron or vice versa? Esthetics aside, it's also question of skill. Taking a railing apart can be tricky, notes Bennett.

"You can't cut them out if you want to use them again so you've really got to be careful," he says. "If you don't do it right, it will look off. It's really best to get someone in who has the experience and skill."

Stair runners are for both esthetics and firm footing, especially for kids and seniors.

Runners can be bought by the foot and installed. Or you can have carpet cut and the edges bound to create your own runner.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Giving yourself reasonable short- and long-term timelines is the best first step in budget management. ISTOCK

Balancing where your money goes

DEBT MANAGEMENT

Student loan repayment, childcare costs and RRSP contributions: it is all possible

Liz Bruckner

In the quest for higher education, Farrah Hunter* has acquired a significant amount of debt. Approximately $80,000 worth.

Having earned her undergraduate honours degree, masters degree, and graduate diploma, the 42-year-old teacher, and single parent of one, is currently working while completing her PhD, and is very open about her financial situation. "I'm not in a position to even think about paying off my debt or to start investing as I'm currently living hand to mouth," she says. "Caring for my child is my biggest and only priority."

Tammie Williams knows the feeling. The 36-year-old married mother of one has managed to pay off her $14,000 student debt since graduating with diplomas from both Durham and Seneca Colleges, but her husband's lingering OSAP loans coupled with child-related costs make getting ahead financially feel impossible. "We pay bills according to their due dates, spend more time with our child by working fewer days and longer hours, and choose to rent instead of buy. Our bills are paid and our daughter is happy, but there's very little cash left at the end of each month."

According to Michael Holmberg, a chartered accountant with Avard Lindsay Holmberg LLP, while it's very common that young parents feel overwhelmed by dismal and often record-high post-secondary-education debt scenarios, there's always hope. "The first step I recommend is taking a good look at your required spending, versus the spending done on items that you can go without. It can be a challenge at first to narrow things down, but eventually, people who get into the habit of creating these kinds of spending reports allow them to plan for bigger investments."

Giving yourself reasonable short- and long-term timelines to follow is wise, says Holmberg, as both can be effective and allow for progression in budget management. From there, setting up an automated weekly or monthly contribution to an RRSP or TFSA so you're 'paying yourself first' and not spending pointlessly is prudent.

> **...taking a good look at your required spending, versus the spending done on items that you can go without...**
>
> Michael Holmberg, chartered accountant, Avard Lindsay Holmberg LLP

When it comes to child-related costs, make a point of scaling back as much as possible. While paying for before- and/or after-school care is often unavoidable for working parents, splurging on the newest toys, gadgets, clothes, accessories, and activities is not. Enlist family and friends to help with childcare where possible, stick to providing the basics, eat out less frequently, and start checking local community or municipality websites to stay current on the free kids programs they offer. (Many organizations will waive or reduce registration fees for kids whose parents volunteer or coach, so consider getting involved to save some money.)

Lastly, make a habit of monitoring your online banking accounts so you're aware of your financial standing, and should you end up with extra cash throughout the year, use it to further your financial goals. "If your focus is to eliminate debt, put the funds toward that endeavour. If you want to earn as much money as possible and you have a line of credit with six per cent interest but you can earn eight per cent on investment, that strategy can work, as well," says Holmberg.

Not subject's real name

THIS SPECIAL REPORT WAS CREATED BY CONTENT SOLUTIONS, INDEPENDENT OF METRO EDITORIAL.

metro SPORTS

"It's still like a World Series tour. We've got to turn the page": Chicago Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant

Whitecaps go on attack

MLS

Robinson inks Montero to add much-needed goals

Vancouver Whitecaps head coach Carl Robinson had scouted dozens of strikers in his seemingly endless search for a proven goal-scorer when an old friend suggested one more name.

Mauro Rosales, who played parts of two seasons for Robinson, knew that former teammate Fredy Montero might be available. He also knew the Whitecaps desperately needed someone to put the ball in the back of the net.

"(Rosales) didn't have any worries about suggesting us as a possible destination," said Robinson. "It took two or three weeks, but everyone worked their socks off day and night."

The Whitecaps announced Wednesday they have acquired Montero from Tianjin Teda of the Chinese Super League on a one-year loan deal with the aim of boosting an offence that has struggled the last three seasons.

"We've got an honest enough locker-room here that we know we need some help in that attacking area," Robinson said on a conference call. "When we're bringing in a player like Fredy Montero you can see everyone has got an extra spring in their step. They're delighted."

Montero played in Major League Soccer for the Seattle Sounders from 2009 to 2012, including two seasons alongside Rosales.

Colombia's Fredy Montero scored 13 goals in 16 appearances with Portugal's Sporting CP in 2013 and 14. ARMANDO FRANCA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Robinson acquired Rosales in 2014 before dealing him to FC Dallas before the 2016 campaign. The Welshman said the respect he showed the player during that period helped get the wheels for the Montero deal in motion.

"In football you talk all the time about relationships," said Robinson. "It just goes to show that being up front and honest with people is the right way forward in whatever walk of life you're in."

Montero, who joins midfielder Matias Laba as a designated player in Vancouver, is a three-time MLS all-star and was the league's newcomer of the year in 2009. The 29-year-old Colombian scored 47 goals and added 34 assists in 119 regular-season appearances with Seattle.

"It was a no-brainer," said Robinson. "It helps the squad on the field as well as off the field. We're excited to have him and get going."

The deal for Montero involved a number of moving parts. Apart from the terms with the Chinese club, Vancouver had to get an agreement in place with the expansion Minnesota United to secure the No. 1 spot in the MLS allocation ranking order to bring him back into the league.

In exchange, the Whitecaps sent Minnesota $100,000 US in general allocation money and $125,000 in targeted allocation money in 2018, and an international roster spot through 2017.

Vancouver has struggled to find a replacement for Camilo Sanvezzo ever since the Brazilian forced his way out of town following a 22-goal campaign in 2013 that won him the MLS Golden Boot award.

The sight of Whitecaps strikers looking skyward or burying faces in hands after missing golden opportunities in front of the opposition goal has been commonplace.

Octavio Rivero looked like the answer after a bright start to the 2015 season, but he faded and was sold last summer. The unproven Masato Kudo was brought in before the 2016 campaign, but he also failed to impress and has since moved on.

"I'm still looking at maybe one or two more moves to make the squad stronger.
Carl Robinson

Vancouver fans have been wondering if and when Robinson was going to make a move for a goal-scorer, and he finally pulled the trigger with Montero.

"Anyone who thinks signing players is easy unfortunately is mistaken," said Robinson, who is set to begin his fourth season in charge. "If you have $5 million then you go spend the money on David Villa. You don't really have to do much homework on David Villa.

"We have to find players that fit into the category of our budget restraints. When you do that, obviously the search gets narrowed."

As part of the deal, the Whitecaps retain the option to keep Montero's MLS rights for the 2018 season.

Montero joins newly signed Peruvian midfielder-forward Yordy Reyna in Vancouver.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

ALL-STAR GAME

Equality statement made in Big Easy

The city hosting this year's NBA All-Star Game has long enjoyed a reputation as a welcoming place for the gay and lesbian community. New Orleans is home to one of the country's oldest gay bars, the gay celebration Southern Decadence draws nearly 200,000 people yearly, and gay and lesbian authors flock there for the Saints and Sinners literary festival.

All of that acceptance will be on full display this weekend in a not-so-subtle statement about equality.

The city of Charlotte was supposed to host the game Sunday, but the NBA moved it to New Orleans when North Carolina passed "the bathroom bill," which limits protections for lesbian, gay and transgender people. It also requires transgender people to use many public restrooms corresponding with the sex on their birth certificate.

Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards touted the state's diversity while lobbying the NBA, saying bringing the game to New Orleans would reaffirm the league's "commitment to communities that value fairness and inclusion."

Just last year, Edwards signed an executive order barring discrimination against LGBTQ state workers and contractors.

The NBA has stated the issue of LGBTQ inclusion played a role in moving the game to New Orleans as did the city's ability to work under a tight deadline on big events. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UFC

Lesnar retires from mixed martial arts

Former UFC heavyweight champion Brock Lesnar has informed the mixed martial arts promotion that he is retired from competition.

The UFC confirmed the former heavyweight champion's decision Wednesday.

Lesnar, 39, returned from a 4.5-year MMA absence last July to beat Mark Hunt at UFC 200, but the result was overturned after Lesnar failed two doping tests. He was subsequently suspended from competition for a year by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which administers the UFC's doping policy.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brock Lesnar GETTY IMAGES

IN BRIEF

OTP cuts rugby 7s funding

Rugby Canada expected to take a hit on Own The Podium funding for its men's sevens team. But it did not expect the entire well to dry up.

Own The Podium has told Rugby Canada that the men's sevens squad, which got $850,000 in OTP recommended funding in 2016-17, won't get anything in fiscal 2017-18. The Canadian men failed to crack the 12-field for the Rio Olympics.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

NBA

Ibaka uplifted by chance with Raps

Serge Ibaka flashed a wide smile, and said he is excited to play for a winner again.

The Toronto Raptors hope the newcomer can help turn them back into one.

Ibaka, who was acquired in Tuesday's trade that sent Terrence Ross to Orlando, arrived at Air Canada Centre on Wednesday amid renewed optimism. The Raptors are hoping the athletic power forward can help pull them out of their worst slump in two seasons, while Ibaka is happy to be back with a team in the playoff race.

"For me it's kind of going up again, going back in competition again and playing for something. I'm very excited," said Ibaka.

It's been down, down, down, however, for Toronto the past few weeks. Heading into Wednesday's matchup against visiting Charlotte, the Raptors had lost 11 of 15 games. Without Ibaka in the lineup, Toronto rallied for a 100-95 comeback victory. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Workers prepare for the NBA All-Star Game festivities outside Smoothie King Center in New Orleans on Tuesday.
GERALD HERBERT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bayern rout leaves Arsenal in big trouble

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Thiago double helps Munich put one foot in quarter-finals

Bayern Munich answered its critics with a comprehensive 5-1 rout of Arsenal in the first leg of their Champions League clash to put one foot in the quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Thiago Alcantara struck twice in a superb performance, while Arjen Robben, Robert Lewandowski and substitute Thomas Muller scored the other goals. Arsenal now faces what seems a near-impossible task in the second leg of the Round of 16 on March 7, despite a first-half equalizer from Alexis Sanchez.

Bayern had been unconvincing in its five games since the winter break but the home side soon took control of the game.

There was little Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina could do to stop Robben from opening the scoring in the 11th minute. Given too much space, the Dutchman cut inside as he's done so often before and let fly with a shot that went in off the underside of the bar.

6

Number of seasons in a row that Arsenal have exited the Champions League in the last 16.

Arsenal was given a lifeline when Lewandowski took down Arsenal captain Laurent Koscielny in the box and the referee awarded the penalty before the half-hour mark.

Amid deafening whistles from the home fans, Manuel Neuer saved Sanchez' weak spot kick and Sanchez then missed the rebound but the Chilean cut the Bayern fans' cheers short when he prodded in at the third attempt.

Arsenal, which lost captain Laurent Koscielny to injury early in the second half, appears set to exit in the Round of 16 for the seventh season in a row.

But it was all Bayern for the second half as Lewandowski rose above two defenders to head into a 2-1 lead on 53 minutes. The Poland striker produced a brilliant back-heeled flick to send Thiago through to score another three minutes later.

Thiago grabbed his second a few minutes later, with a deflected shot after a corner, before Müller completed the rout two minutes after he came on in the 86th.

Munich's Thomas Muller celebrates making it 5-1 against Arsenal at Allianz Arena in Germany. JEAN CATUFFE/GETTY IMAGES

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Cook time: 30
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 6 large boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- olive oil
- salt and pepper
- 3/4 pound mini red, white and purple potatoes, halved or quartered if large
- 6-8 cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 cup bocconcini
- 8-10 basil leaves, roughly chopped

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400.

2. Rub the chicken thighs on both sides with olive oil and then generously season with salt and pepper.

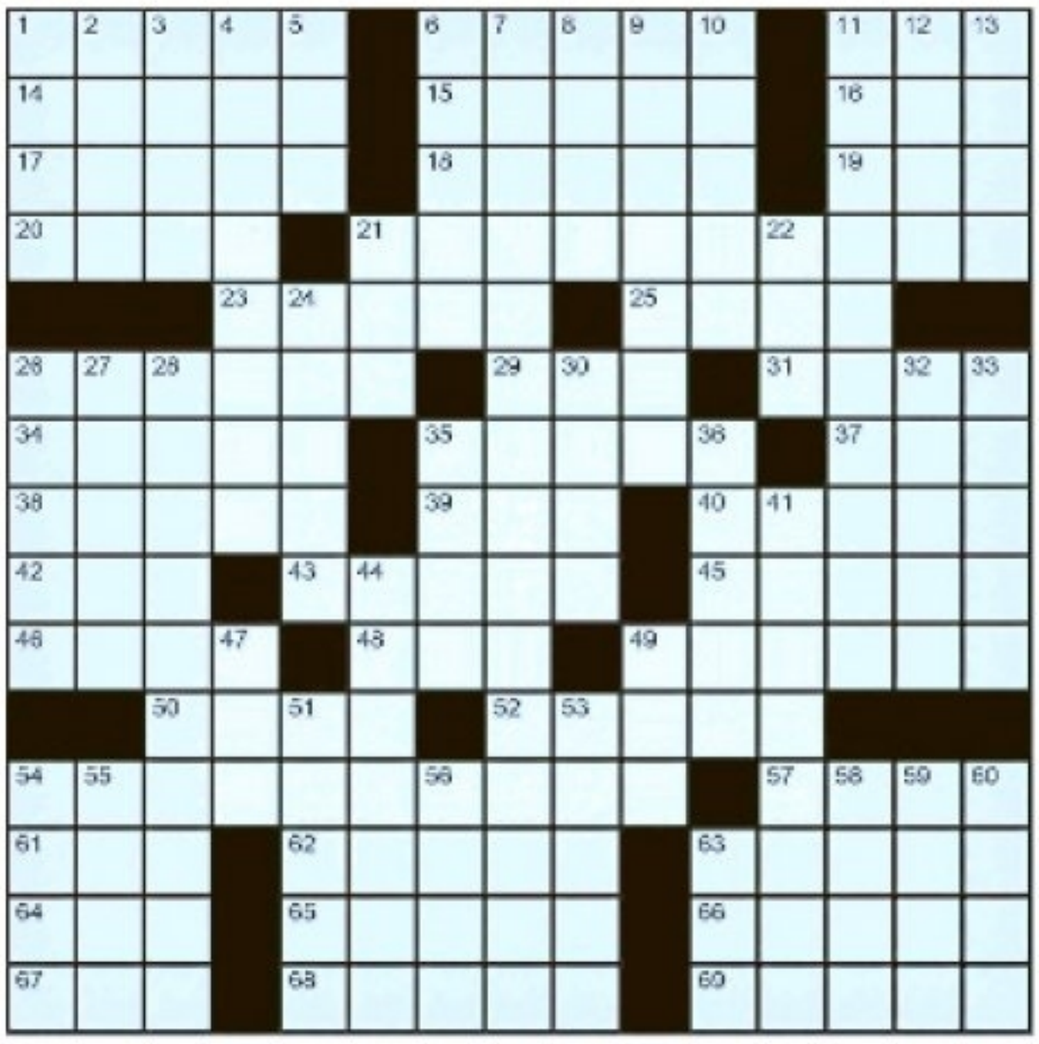
3. Heat large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, cover and cook until it browns on one side, about 3 minutes. Turn the chicken; add the potatoes. Allow the chicken to cook another 3 minutes to brown then add the cherry tomatoes; transfer to oven and roast, uncovered, until chicken and potatoes are cooked, about 20 minutes.

4. Remove skillet from pan and toss in cheese and garnish with basil.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Movie
6. "The table __ __." (Helpful dinner-time comment)
11. Tree's fluid
14. Pliant/agile
15. Put __ __ (Get working)
16. Make the score even
17. "__ Which Way But Loose" (1978)
18. West: French
19. Pro golfer Ernie
20. Half, in Hull
21. Most like bread's famous spread
23. Strip of mown lawn
25. Table salt, chemistry-style
26. Indifference
29. The Beeb
31. Mr. Kristofferson
34. "The Godfather" (1972) syndicate
35. Herd-heralded
37. Rapscallion
38. More likely to
39. Not in fashion
40. Adversary
42. Mystery novelist Ms. Grafton
43. People from Helsinki's country
45. __-3 fatty acid
46. Baby Atlantic Herring, for short
48. 'Sure' sign
49. Nova Scotia's provincial bird
50. Big bathing basins
52. Trunk
54. Daytime TV dramas: 2 wds.
57. Young sheep
61. Sneeze starters...
62. __ Marner (1861 novel)
63. Jewel
64. Meet for a meeting
65. Elliptical path
66. Etruria's environs
67. Horticulturist's implement
68. Financial resources
69. Fathers: French

DOWN
1. Escaped
2. 1995: "Lightning Crashes" band
3. Detail
4. Modelling legend Ms. Brinkley
5. Important
6. "We Can Work __ __" by The Beatles
7. 1971 song by #11-Down: 2 wds.
8. Tallow source
9. Gist
10. Bright pet fish
11. Canadian band with the hit "Ten Pound Note", as well as #7-Down: 2 wds.
12. Is feeling poorly
13. Nuisance
21. James or Hudson
22. "Eeew!"
24. Dock
26. Stockpile
27. __ New Guinea
28. Leftover flavour
30. C-3PO, et al.
32. Effigy
33. Flare
35. Uni
36. Smeltery waste
41. Discourteous
44. Motivate in a way
47. Clone or copy, curtly
49. Alternative words
51. Tom Hanks sitcom, "__ Buddies"
53. Brewery kilns
54. Belt alternative
55. 2004: "__ Is for Lovers" by Hawthorne Heights
56. British actor Idris
58. Slightly open
59. Sort of spy
60. Purchases
63. Marcel Marceau's clown

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Talk to groups or classes today, especially with younger people. This also is a good day to do some goal setting for the future.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You are mentally energetic today, which is why you will make a good impression talking to bosses, parents and VIPs. Don't hesitate to share your ideas.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
It is easy to study today or learn anything new. You also will love to make travel plans and have discussions about philosophy, religion, politics and metaphysics.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
This is a good day to discuss shared property, inheritances, taxes and debt. You have the mental energy to plow through a lot of red-tape details.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Discussions with partners and close friends will be lively and dynamic today. Everyone is full of bright ideas, and of course, you are quick to see the bottom line and grasp the big picture.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This will be a productive day at work because you can communicate well with others. In addition, you have the energy to work with your hands and accomplish something.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You are creative today. Get busy working in the arts, the entertainment world, the hospitality industry or anything to do with sports or children.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
This is an excellent day to tackle home repairs. It's also a great day for family discussions, because you have a desire to communicate.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Writers, salespeople, actors and teachers are empowered today. You are keen to communicate and you have great ideas. This is because your mental energy is strong.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You're full of moneymaking ideas today. It's a good idea to write them down in case you want to act on one of them later. (It's not every day that we have bright ideas.)

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Mercury is in your sign now, which is why you are so keen to communicate to others. You have ideas and dreams, and you want to enlighten others by sharing these ideas.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Research of any kind will go well today, because you have the motivation, stamina and the attention to detail that is needed.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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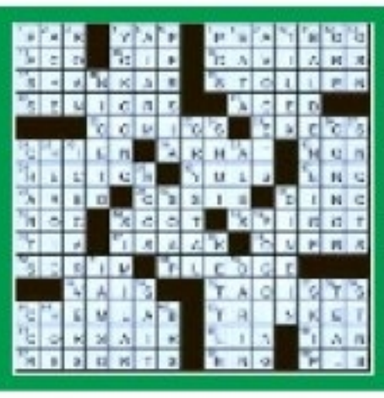
YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers from the play page.

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games



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6	7	9	1	8	4	5	2	3
5	1	8	3	2	7	4	9	6

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FEBRUARY 16 - 25, 2017

SARAH SILVERMAN
FEB 25 - QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

JIM GAFFIGAN
2 SHOWS!
FEB 24 - QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

TREVOR NOAH
2 SHOWS!
FEB 23 - QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

CHRIS D'ELIA
2 SHOWS!
FEB 24 - VOGUE THEATRE

ILIZA
FEB 17 - VOGUE THEATRE

TOM SEGURA
FEB 25 - VOGUE THEATRE

GAME GRUMPS LIVE!
FEB 22 - QUEEN ELIZABETH THEATRE

PIFF THE MAGIC DRAGON
FEB 18 - VOGUE THEATRE

MY FAVORITE MURDER
FEB 18 - VOGUE THEATRE

MOSHE KASHER
FEB 18 - THE RIO

COLIN QUINN
FEB 24 & 25 - THE RIO

BRIAN POSEHN
FEB 16, 17 & 18 - THE COMEDY MIX

SiriusXM Top Comic
FEB 23 - THE COMEDY MIX

the Alternative show hosted by Andy Kindler
FEB 24 & 25 - THE RIO

FORTUNE FEIMSTER
FEB 17 - THE BILTMORE

JON DORE
FEB 24 & 25 - THE COMEDY MIX

MICHELLE WOLF
FEB 19 - THE BILTMORE

NATE BARGATZE
FEB 18 - THE BILTMORE

TODD GLASS
FEB 23-25 - YUKS YUKS

APARNA NANCHERLA
FEB 25 - THE BILTMORE

K. TREVOR WILSON
FEB 16, 17 & 18 - YUK YUK'S

BARRY CRIMMINS
FEB 23 - THE BILTMORE

STOP PODCASTING YOURSELF
FEB 23 - THE BILTMORE

COMEDY SHORT SHORTS
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